United Nations

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Commission on Truth issues report placing responsibility for violations of human rights in El Salvador between 1980 and 1991; Secretary-General, at ceremony at Headquarters, says United Nations task in El Salvador "is far from over".

+ Costs for enlargement of UNOSOM II estimated at about $1.5 billion, according to report by Secretary-General; meanwhile, at Conference on National Reconciliation in Somalia in Addis Ababa, United Nations appeals to Somali leaders to make peace and work towards rebuilding "shattered" country.

+ Report by Secretary-General on Bosnian peace talks says it is "crucial" that Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serbs sign provincial map, so that implementation of peace plan can begin.

+ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to begin voluntary repatriation of 1.3 million Mozambicans next month.

+ In message to International Congress on Education for Human Rights, Secretary-General says education and public information are indispensable elements in efforts to protect human rights.

+ Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands agree to conclude framework treaty governing all aspects of their relations, affected by "Bougainville crisis".

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The Commission on the Truth, set up to investigate acts of violence committed by both sides during 12 years of conflict in El Salvador, has issued a report which places responsibility for the worst and most widespread violations of human rights in that country between 1980 and July 1991.

The report names the institutions and individuals whom it found responsible in the cases it studied. Among its conclusions, the three-member Commission found that in November 1989, several members of the Salvadoran

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Army's high command ordered the murder of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her young daughter. The Commission calls for the immediate dismissal and permanent banning from military and security duties of Defence Minister, General Rene Emilio Ponce, as well as of other prominent members of the Salvadoran Army. It also presents wide-ranging recommendations aimed at removing human rights violators from public offices, reforming the justice system and the Armed Forces, as well as promoting human rights, democracy, the rule of law and national reconciliation.

The Commission also found the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) responsible for having committed "grave acts of violence", including the assassination of seven civilian mayors. The Commission received more than 800 denunciations of grave violations by the FMLN, including nearly 400 killings and over 300 disappearances. It calls on the FMLN to renounce permanently all forms of violence in the pursuit of political ends.

The Truth Commission is composed of three international notables selected by former United Nations Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar: former President of Colombia, Belisario Betancur, former Foreign Minister of Venezuela, Reinaldo Figueredo Planchart, and Professor of Law, George Washington University, Thomas Buergenthal. The mandate of the Commission included recommending the legal, political and administrative measures to heal the Salvadoran society.

At a ceremony at Headquarters this morning, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said the implementation of the El Salvador Peace Accords stood out as a shining example of the many challenges facing the United Nations. However, he said, the task was far from over. With the cease-fire process over and the armed conflict at an end, "El Salvador now faces the enormous challenge of reunification of the Salvadoran society", he said.

Introducing the report of the Truth Commission, former President of Colombia, Belisario Betancour, told correspondents that violence was a flame which had ravaged the roots of El Salvador. It reached the cities, the families, the sacred homes and educational centres and had affected justice and the public administration. "Violence turned everything into destruction and death", he said.

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The costs for the deployment and enlargement of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) for a 12-month period would amount to approximately $1.5 billion, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

According to an addendum to his report proposing the deployment of a 30,000-member United Nations operation in Somalia, the estimate does not include any "unencumbered" balance of appropriations that may exist from UNOSOM - which is estimated at some $70 million "at this time". The report

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also points out that the costs should continue to be considered as an expense of the Organization to be borne by Member States, if the Council agrees to the proposal.

Meanwhile, at the opening of the Conference on National Reconciliation in Somalia in Addis Ababa today, the United Nations and other international bodies appealed to the Somali political leaders to make peace and work towards rebuilding their "shattered" country.

The Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative for Somalia, Lansana Kouyate, told the Conference in a statement that without effective disarmament in Somalia, all efforts at national reconciliation, relief operations as well as rehabilitation and reconstruction would "remain in jeopardy".

At this session, he said, efforts would be made to remove all obstacles towards rebuilding regional and national institutions and also to make a collective commitment to support the rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes.
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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has said that "after six months of intensive negotiations", under the Chairmanship of Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen, it was now "crucial" that the Bosnian Government and the Bosnian Serbs agree to and sign the provincial map as quickly as possible, so that implementation of the plan might begin.

In his report to the Security Council, dated 12 March, the Secretary-General said agreement on the peace plan and its "rapid and robust implementation" offered the best prospect for improving the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The report also noted that agreement had been reached between the three Bosnian parties to establish an International Human Rights Monitoring Mission to be headed by an Interim Human Rights Commissioner for Bosnia and Herzegovina, based in Sarajevo. The Commissioner would be supported by international human rights monitors, deployed throughout the country and particularly in areas affected by "ethnic cleansing".

The Bosnian peace talks are scheduled to resume at Headquarters later this week, with the participation of Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and the Bosnian Croat leader Mate Boban.
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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Government of Mozambique have announced the voluntary repatriation of 1.3 million Mozambican refugees beginning next month.

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According to a press release issued today, the operation would be the "biggest ever undertaken by the UNHCR" with more than half a million Mozambicans expected to return this year. The programme is estimated to cost $30 million for transportation and re-integration of the refugees. The agency is expected to launch an appeal in April for donations to cover the operation which will take at least three years.

The signing of a peace agreement in Rome last October by the Government of Mozambique and the Mozambique National Resistence Movement (RENAMO) to end the country's 16-year civil war paved the way for the repatriation operation. The United Nations is currently deploying military observers in the country to monitor and verify the peace agreement and to assist the country in holding free and fair elections in September. The UNHCR noted that since the signing of the agreement more than 100,000 Mozambican refugees had gone home on their own.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in his message to the International Congress on Education for Human Rights and Democracy, said that human rights education and public information were an indispensable element in efforts to protect human rights. The Congress, which was held in Montreal last week, was organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Centre for Human Rights.

In his message delivered by Joseph V. Reed, his Special Representative for Public Affairs, the Secretary-General said that a crucial element in the success of any plan or programme for human rights education would be the commitment of Governments to provide, nationally and internationally, the required resources.

He added that the tasks before the Congress were of the highest importance as they undoubtedly would shape education for human rights well into the next century.

At a certain level of specialization relating to human rights and the administration of justice, the Secretary-General added, standard teaching materials could be prepared based on international standards.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali went on to say that the international community should support the national activities by encouraging the ratification of international instruments and by providing policy support to human rights education and public information. During 1994, he added, an international assessment could be carried out which would review the effectiveness of existing international education and public information activities.

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Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands have agreed to conclude a framework treaty governing all aspects of their relations, affected by the "Bougainville crisis". The island of Bougainville shares common geographic,

cultural and ethnic traits with Solomon Islands, but was separated in 1899 from those Islands and became a part of Papua New Guinea.

According to a joint statement issued last month, following talks between the Foreign Ministers of the two countries, both sides have confirmed the need for a bilateral treaty for joint border surveillance and administration between them. The statement was contained in a letter to the Secretary-General signed by both countries' Permanent Representatives to the United Nations.

The new development follows a protest lodged last year by the Solomon Islands concerning "acts of aggression" committed by the armed forces of the Government of Papua New Guinea against its territory.
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